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Address editorial communications to Dr. George H. Kress as per address above. Address business and advertising communications to John Hunton.

EDITOR GEORGE H. KRESS
Editorial Board

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EDITORIALS

A COMPULSORY HEALTH INSURANCE LAW PROPOSED FOR CALIFORNIA!

Background of the Call for the Special Session of C.M.A. House of Delegates.—On December 2, 1944, Governor Earl Warren and State Director of Public Health Wilton L. Halverson visited C.M.A. Council Chairman Philip K. Gilman in Oak Knoll Naval Hospital, and at that conference Governor Warren told Captain Gilman he felt the time had come for the State of California to provide, through appropriate legislation, broader medical care, and also other protection against the catastrophes associated with illness, for all citizens of California who belong to the lower income groups.

Governor Warren told President-Elect Gilman he was presenting the subject to him that the matter, in turn, might be placed before the constituted authorities of the California Medical Association prior to the session of the Legislature which would convene on January 8. He also expressed his hope that the medical profession of the State would take an active interest in any medical care legislation that would be presented to the 56th California Legislature.

In reply, Council Chairman Gilman said he would promptly arrange for an informal conference at which Governor Warren could indicate to representatives of the California Medical Association his personal views on the subject of medical care for low income groups.

Accordingly, members of the C.M.A. Executive Committee held a meeting on the evening of December 12th at which time the nature of impending medical care legislation, insofar as information was available, received comment.

On the next day, Wednesday, December 13th, in San Francisco, Governor Warren spoke to officers and invited guests, and outlined further his own thoughts on the subject of adequate medical care. In this issue of CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE, on pages 25-40, appear minutes and memoranda bearing on the above and subsequent happenings. A perusal of the digest of Governor Warren's remarks, on page 27, will give C.M.A. members an insight concerning the problem that confronted the Association's Council, and the reasons that led the Councilors to unanimously vote to issue a call for the special

session of the House of Delegates of the California Medical Association, held subsequently in Los Angeles on January 4, 5, and 6. A letter from President Lowell S. Goin on December 20th was sent to every member of the Association. (See CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE, for December, on page 313.)

Since the subject of compulsory sickness insurance has many controversial phases, it is important that C.M.A. members take the time to read the minutes and other information above referred to, so that, in later exchanges of views and discussions, actual facts on what took place may be kept in mind. Through such perusal, useless argumentation, based on personal impressions or opinions, may be avoided.

* * *

Attitude of California's Governor.—It is important that all physicians keep in mind that the executive head of the California Commonwealth, Governor Earl Warren, expressed himself somewhat as follows:

The lower income groups of California citizens are entitled to adequate medical care; the State of California has an obligation to devise ways and means through which much medical care will be made available to these citizens; the trend of public opinion and effort is in favor of procedures to provide such medical care.

Governor Warren believes this obligation to provide adequate medical care should be promptly met; and from information he had received, he inferred that legislation designed to meet these objectives would be presented to the 1945 Legislature by Labor or other groups; also, he hoped the medical profession, as an interested party having major interests, would indicate the nature of its wishes and coöperation.

Further, in case the Legislature failed to enact proposed legislation, the Governor believed it was quite possible that interested groups other than the medical profession, through referendum-initiative would pass on to the electorate of California, the responsibility of decision on adoption of one or other medical care plans to be placed on the ballot of the next general election.

Governor Warren remained with the physicians who were present at the December 13th conference, listened to their criticisms concerning phases of some compulsory health insurance systems, and answered questions put to him.

After his departure, members of the Council continued their meeting, and the call for a special session of the C.M.A. House of Delegates, to be held in Los Angeles on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, January 4-6, 1945, was one of the actions taken. The Official Call, outlining the purposes of the Special Session of the House of Delegates, printed in red ink on a stiff paper insert, appeared in the December issue of the Official Journal, opposite page 281, and is again given place in the current number on page 28.

Los Angeles Meeting of the C.M.A. House of Delegates.—Concerning the three-day session of the House of Delegates of the California Medical Association in Los Angeles, on January 4-6, the following may be stated:

Almost every component county society was represented by a full delegation, the absentees being largely from a few of the smaller county units;

The proceedings were marked by intense interest; and resolutions submitted, some thirty in number, as well as the many speeches and comments thereon, and the presentations by representatives of A. F. of L., C. I. O. and the Farm Bureau, all were given careful attention;

The open and executive meetings of the House and of the Resolutions Committee (both open to C.M.A. delegates and members), were carried on through the three days and nights, the Speaker endeavoring to give all delegates who desired to make comment, either for or against proposals submitted, full opportunity to do so:

The progress report of the Resolutions Committee, (consisting of H. W. Bosworth, Los Angeles, Chairman; Dwight H. Murray, Napa; J. J. Crane, Los Angeles; G. D. Delprat, San Francisco; and Walter Beckh, San Francisco), was submitted on Friday, and the revised report presented on Saturday received earnest discussion;

The final report of the Resolutions Committee, as amended, was adopted on Saturday afternoon, January 6th, and was immediately given to the press. This report appears in this issue on page 32.

* * *

Full Report of Proceedings Will Appear As a Separate Monograph.—Concerning the full proceedings of the House, these are now being transcribed by the stenotypist and secretaries. The C.M.A. Council has voted that the record of the proceedings be printed as a separate monograph, a copy to be sent under separate cover to every member of the California Medical Association. Envelopes will be suitably marked to indicate nature of contents, and members of the Association are requested to instruct their office assistants not to throw these reports into the waste basket. The future of medical practice in California, and, to lesser extent, perhaps even in the United States, depends upon full understanding and coöperation in the issues at stake. Therefore, the report of proceedings should be read by all C.M.A. members and placed in their files for future reference.

* * *

Press Reports on the Proceedings of the C.M.A. House of Delegates.—As was to be expected, the reports which appeared in California newspapers, and which were broadcast through the national press associations, were of varying nature. Particularly so, since Governor Warren, in addressing the California Legislature at its opening meeting on Monday, January 8th (two

days after the adjournment of the C.M.A. House of Delegates) brought medical care issues to the front, as may be noted in excerpts from his comments on "Prepaid Medical Service":

... "It is my recommendation that you [the California Legislature] take action at this session of the Legislature on a program which will bring adequate medical care to the people of our State, on a prepaid basis. . . .

... "I am convinced that if we are to keep abreast of needs in the services which we afford our people, we must start on this program immediately."

The section of Governor Warren's address to the Legislature relating to "Prepaid Medical Service," appears in this issue, on page 35. All C.M.A. members should take the time to read it, and if possible, also the other items bearing thereon. Better far, for physicians to have clear understanding and orientation from the beginning, than to engage in sharp criticism, misunderstanding and recrimination later on.

The Council of the California Medical Association solicits the prompt advice of component county units, and of all members, both in civilian practice and military service. Communications may be sent to individual Councilors or to the Association Secretary, at 450 Sutter Building, San Francisco (8).

* * *

What Is Ahead?—One guess is perhaps as good as another. For, who can tell in advance what the final result will be, depending as it does on the ballots of Assemblymen and State Senators, on so controversial a subject as compulsory health insurance?

According to press reports, Governor Warren will present a bill of his own.

In Los Angeles, before the C.M.A. House of Delegates, representatives of Labor (C.I.O.), stated they would present their own bill. Regarding this, see also in this issue, on pages 32 and 40.

Note may be made that it is possible the California Medical Association may deem it advisable to present a bill of its own, in which would be incorporated the principles and procedures espoused by its members, as understood by its officers.

If the Legislature, now in session, by May of this year, 1945, enacts one or the other of these medical care bills that will be submitted, or a composite thereof, such a measure then would be placed on Governor Warren's desk for approval or veto.

At the December 13th meeting, in answer to a direct question by a Councilor, Governor Warren stated if such a bill was presented to him, and its contents were not too vicious, he felt he would be obliged to attach his signature, giving approval.

However, the present 56th California Legislature can by-pass the proposed bills and through referendum, submit such a measure to the people, for electorate approval. Such approval

would make the law partake of the nature of a constitutional amendment, with all the serious implications involved in constitutional amendments.

Or, the Legislature may take no action other than to appoint an Interim Committee of Senators and Assemblymen to study the entire subject, and bring to the next Legislature, two years hence, a report with perhaps, some recommendations.

Or, one or more of the groups submitting bills to the Legislature, may endeavor, independently, to secure the necessary signatures to place their respective measures on the ballot of the next general election of the State, in November, 1946, for direct initiative vote by the people.

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From the above and what appears on this subject elsewhere in this issue, it should be apparent to all, that, during the coming weeks and months the officers and members of the California Medical Association will be called upon for much serious thinking and action. Let every member stand by his post and, when called on, lend a hand to render all possible aid to support that program and those plans that will insure to the citizens of California adequate medical service of highest quality. Physicians know better than others the conditions that make for high quality of medical service. On the issue of quality of medical service, there can be no compromise. Standards must be preserved and promoted, and plans that would make for lower types of service must be fought to the bitter end.

In conclusion, request is again made that all members read carefully the various items to which reference has been made above.

In due course, other statements and comments will follow.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE PAYS OFF

In the past, when great battles were fought, loss of life was multiplied tenfold because of lack of prompt and adequate medical care for the wounded. But in the present war the story has been different. Even yet the full account of the achievements of medicine on "D-Day" has not been impressed upon the country.

One correspondent reports that within forty-five minutes after the first troops landed on the shores of France, a medical unit was on the beachhead picking up casualties, while in the background a landing craft was being converted into an operating theatre.

During the first day, twenty-two major operations were performed by this single unit. From dawn on "D-Day" until four o'clock in the afternoon, the unit remained on the beach. Blood plasma had been landed and transfusions made from mobile equipment.

Fifty thousand American doctors are in the armed forces. Everyone of them is a trained expert at the business of saving lives. At last those civilians who have had to linger in crowded waiting rooms to secure the attention of the overworked doctors on the home front, can see the reason for the inconvenience thrust upon them.—Oakland *Inter City Express*.

Life, to be worthy of a rational being, must always be in progression.

—Samuel Johnson, *Letter to Mrs. Piozzi*.